ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The present invention relates generally to the field of human genetics. Specifically, the present invention relates to methods and materials used to isolate and detect a human depression predisposing gene, specifically the apoptotic protease activating factor 1 (*APAF1*) gene, some mutant alleles of which cause susceptibility to depression. More specifically, the invention relates to germline mutations in the *APAF1* gene and their use in the diagnosis of predisposition to depression. The invention also relates to the prophylaxis and/or therapy of depression associated with a mutation in the *APAF1* gene. The invention further relates to the screening of drugs for depression therapy. Finally, the invention relates to the screening of the *APAF1* gene for mutations/alterations, which are useful for diagnosing the predisposition to depression.